Indus River

A chaos [noise and confusion] of water flowing down from mountains in the north formedtributaries [small streams] that merged into the Indus River. Sometime around 6000 BCE anomadic [wandering] herding [moving (like cattle)] people settled into villages just west of theIndus River. There they created order for themselves, growing barley [(grain, eaten for food)] andwheat using sickles with flint blades, and they lived in small houses built with adobe [clay] bricks.After 5000 BCE the climate in their region [area] changed, bringing more rainfall.Apparently [(based on what's seen or what seems obvious)] they were able to grow more food,and they grew in population. They began domesticating [taming/controlling] sheep, goats andcows and then water buffalo. Then after 4000 BCE they began to trade beads and shells withpeople in the distant areas of central Asia (around the Caspian Sea) and other areas west of theKhyber Pass. And they began using bronze [(brown metal that's copper and tin)] and workingmetals. With time and experience they were improving their technology.   
  
The climate changed again, bringing still more rainfall, and on the plains along the Indus Rivergrew jungles inhabited [lived in] by crocodiles, rhinoceros, tigers, buffalo and elephants. Byaround 2600, a civilization [city/people] as grand as that in Mesopotamia and Egypt had begunon the Indus Plain and surrounding areas. They had covered sewers and, drainage systemsbeneath their streets. By 2300 BCE this civilization [city/people] reached maturity and was tradingwith Mesopotamia.

**Mesopotamia**

In that part of the Middle East called the Fertile [Life-giving] Crescent, hunter-gatherers began planting gardens. By 7000 BCE there was farming that required [needed/demanded] permanent settlement. By 4500 BCE those archaeologists [(scientists who study people who lived a very long time ago)] call Ubaidians were living in towns near where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers emptied into the Persian Gulf. This was in Mesopotamia (Greek for "between two rivers"). The Ubaidians drained marshes [low, wet land areas]. They grew wheat and barley [(grain, eaten for food)] and irrigated [watered] their crops by digging ditches to river waters. They kept farm animals. Some manufactured pottery. They did weaving, leather or metal work, and some were involved in trade with other societies [(communities of people)].   
  
Where there had been small hunter-gatherer societies [(communities of people)] getting food for themselves, the producers of food were now able to support many who worked at other occupations - such as the priesthood, pottery making, weaving, carpentry [(the art of building things with wood)] and smithing. There were also traders, and the Sumerians developed an extensive [long/big] commerce [(the buying and selling of goods)] by land and sea. They built seaworthy ships, and they imported from afar [from far away] items made from the wood, stone, tin and copper not found nearby.   
There was ownership of property. Some people were more wealthy [rich] than others, and political power was unevenly distributed. Sumerian society [(community of people/all good people in the world)] around 3000 BCE was not as sharing or as egalitarian [equal (someone who believes in equality)] as hunter-gatherer societies [(communities of people)] had been or were. The Sumerians appear "to have been the first people to commandeer [take control] the agricultural [farming-based] surplus [(more than needed)] grown by the community and create a privileged [(enjoying a lot of special treatment, money, and other advantages in life)] ruling class."   
  
Around 4000 BCE a people called Sumerians moved into Mesopotamia, perhaps [maybe] from around the Caspian Sea. By 3800 BCE the Sumerians had supplanted [replaced] the Ubaidians and Semites in southern Mesopotamia. They built better canals [narrow, human-made waterways] for irrigating [water-giving] crops and for transporting [moving] crops by boat to village centers. They improved their roads over which their donkeys trod [walked], with some of their donkeys pulling wheeled carts.   
  
Writing   
Sumerian writing is the oldest full-fledged [real (and mature)] writing that archaeologists [(scientists who study people who lived a very long time ago)] have discovered. The Ubaidians may have introduced the Sumerians to the rudiments [basics/beginnings] of writing and numerical [number-based] calculation, which the Sumerians used for calculating and to keep records of supplies and goods  [products (that are bought and sold) ] exchanged [swapped/switched]. The Sumerians wrote arithmetic [math] based on units of ten - the number of fingers on both hands. Concerned about [Worried about] their star-gods, they mapped the stars and divided a circle into units of sixty.

Egyptian

The waters of the Nile came from annual [once-a-year] rains in the tropics to the south of Egypt. The Nile rose in early July, and in October it receded [moved back (or away)], leaving little water and a layer of black, fertile [life-giving] soil - inspiring [very interesting/intelligent] people there to call the area the Black Land.

For farming to thrive [grow and do well] along the Nile, a system of controlling its waters was necessary. To increase their ability to plant, people trapped waters when the river rose, and they lined their water basins [(bowls/areas drained by a river)] with clay to prevent the water from sinking into the soil so there would be water to use when the river dried again. From sometime around 3500 BCE the Egyptians began building a system of dikes and sluices [long water drains], and around this time Egypt began growing food in greater abundance [(oversupply/large amount)] than elsewhere [in other places] in Africa.

The Egyptians grew wheat, barley [(grain, eaten for food)], beans, lettuce, peas, radishes, onions, olives, dates and figs, and they raised cattle, [(cows, bulls, etc.),] sheep, goats and pigs. The construction would continue for more than a millennium so that by 2000 BCE both sides of the Nile would be a checkerboard of water basins [(bowls/areas drained by a river)], sluices [long water drains] and canals [narrow, human-made waterways], with water being drawn from basins [(bowls/areas drained by a river)] upstream whenever water was insufficient [not enough] downstream.

Irrigation [Crop-watering/rinsing with water] systems and grain storage had to be maintained. Property divisions had to be maintained and disputes [arguments] mitigated [lessened (something bad)]. Large landowners formed aristocracies [(groups of rich and powerful people)] and allied [(together in friendship)/(got together as partners)] themselves with kings, or they chose who would be king - while most people remained small farmers and were expected to give a share of their crops to their king as taxes and to give free labor for community projects.

Communities came into conflict [fought with each other] and warred against each other. Local kings vied [fought] with each other for wider power and control.

After years of war in Egypt came a new era  [time in history ] of peace and security along the Nile. Peace was served not only by unity [togetherness] but also by something lacking in [not having enough] Mesopotamia: natural barriers [(things that block or stop other things)] against wandering peoples.

Yellow River

By 5000 BCE, tribal agricultural [farming-based] communities had spread in what today is China. There were agricultural [farming-based] villages from the Wei River Valley eastward parallel with the great Yellow River (Huang He). That river flowed out of the Kunlun Mountains through deciduous [(dropping leaves every autumn)] forest and along the loess soil of the North China Plain and then to the Gulf of Jili.   
  
Where people were free of forest and had access to water they grew millet, while they continued to hunt deer and other game and to fish and gather food. And they raised dogs, pigs and chickens. They built one-room homes dug into the earth, with roofs of clay or thatch: pit homes grouped in villages. They had spinning wheels and knitted and wove fibers. And they made pottery decorated with art.   
  
Flooding along the Yellow River was worse than it was along the Yangzi River to the south. Along the Yangzi River, through the Hubei Basin  [(bowl/area drained by a river) ] and on the coastal plain to Hangzhou Bay, farming had also developed, but people along the Yellow River had to work harder at flood control and irrigation [crop-watering/rinsing with water], and perhaps [maybe] this stimulated a greater effort at organization. This greater organized effort along the Yellow River may have made it larger and more dense in population than what developed along the Yangzi.   
  
Where people were producing surpluses [(more than what's needed)] of food - more food than they needed to survive - warriors had an incentive [(reward or reason for doing something)] to conquer [win (by force)] and to hold territory [(land area owned or controlled by someone)] - rather than just plunder [steal (and leave behind almost nothing)/stolen things] and move on

During the Shang dynasty [(period of time with the same powerful family rulers)] civilization [city/people] along the Yellow River had canals [narrow, human-made waterways] for irrigating [water-giving] crops. Communities had drains that ran water out of town. They made beer from millet. They extended their trading and used money in the form of cowry shells. Shang merchants [(people who sell things)] traded in salt, iron, copper, tin, lead and antimony [(metallic element)], some of which had to be imported from far away. As early as the 1300s BCE a bronze [(brown metal that's copper and tin)] casting industry had developed. This was later than the rise of bronze [(brown metal that's copper and tin)] casting in Europe and West Asia, but it became the most advanced in the world.